

There are close to 13,000 Canadians, most of them planning for travel to a foreign country in the near future on either business or pleasure whose passports or passport applications are being held up, in one form or another, due to the current postal strike and slowdown.

The Passport Office at Ottawa Headquarters estimates that by tonight (Wednesday) there will be 4,000 passports awaiting mailing to owners. Also delayed are 2,000 letters to applicants to advise them they have made mistakes in their applications or have not included the necessary documentation. There are also approximately 7,000 "Pending" applications which have arrived in the last month or so and concerning which letters have been sent to the applicants requesting further information or documentation.

Fortunately, the Passport Office has opened a number of Regional Offices in major centres in the past three years across the country to help process the growing number of applications from travel-conscious Canadians. These offices are located in Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Edmonton and Vancouver. There is, of course, an office in Ottawa, too, where personal application may be made.

Where possible, these offices are being used as distribution centres by having processed passports sent there from Ottawa via private despatch and express services. The intended recipients are then advised by telephone or telegram to pick up these passports at the Regional Office.

In other cases, where it is clear that a passport is actually held up in the mail and is needed urgently, "Limited Validity" passports are being issued to cover the emergency period. These are to be returned upon receipt of the regular passport at which time the \$10.00 fee for the "Limited Validity" passport will be refunded.

By these measures it is hoped that as many Canadians as possible will be able to receive their passports quickly in spite of the current postal difficulties. Nevertheless, these measures cannot guarantee delivery of passports to all applicants and unfortunate delays will occur in many cases. Applicants who do not have an urgent requirement for passports at the present time are urged, therefore, to delay application until the current postal difficulties have been settled.